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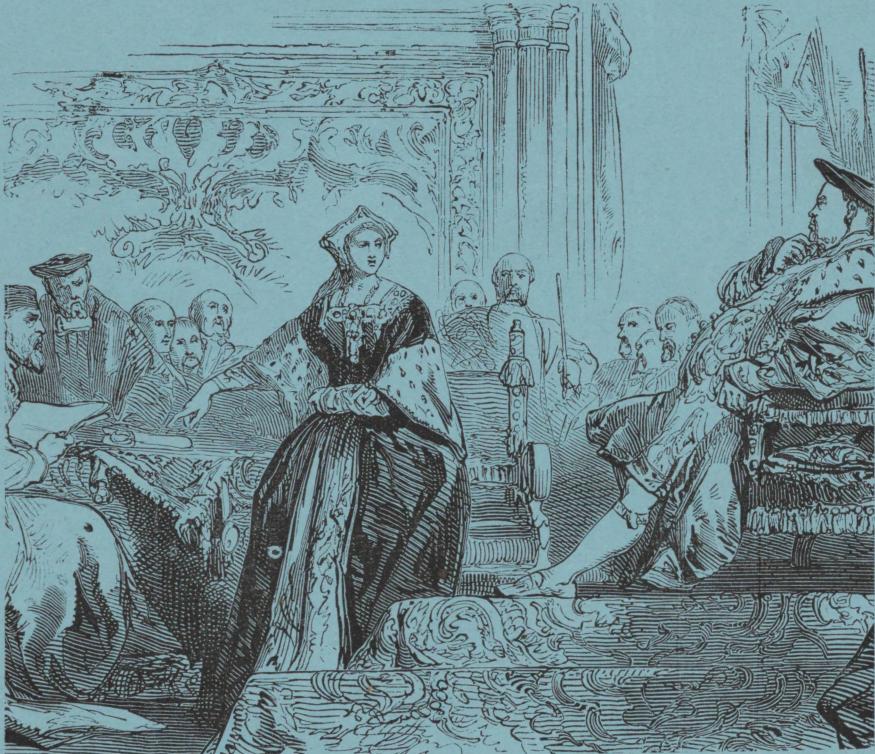
ONE PENNY WEEKLY.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

# STANFIELD HALL.

BY J. F. SMITH,

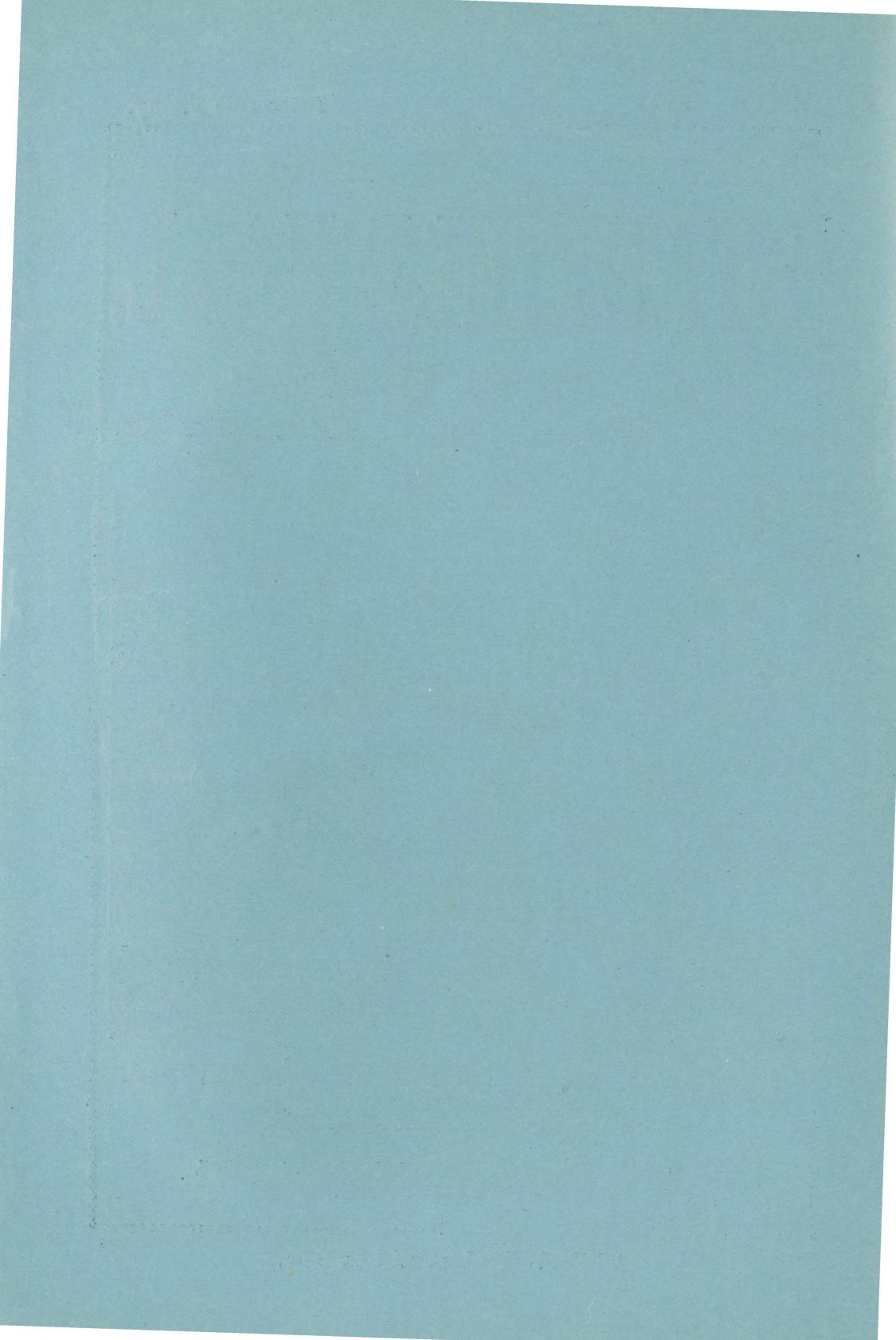
Author of "Minnigrey," "Woman and Her Master," &c.



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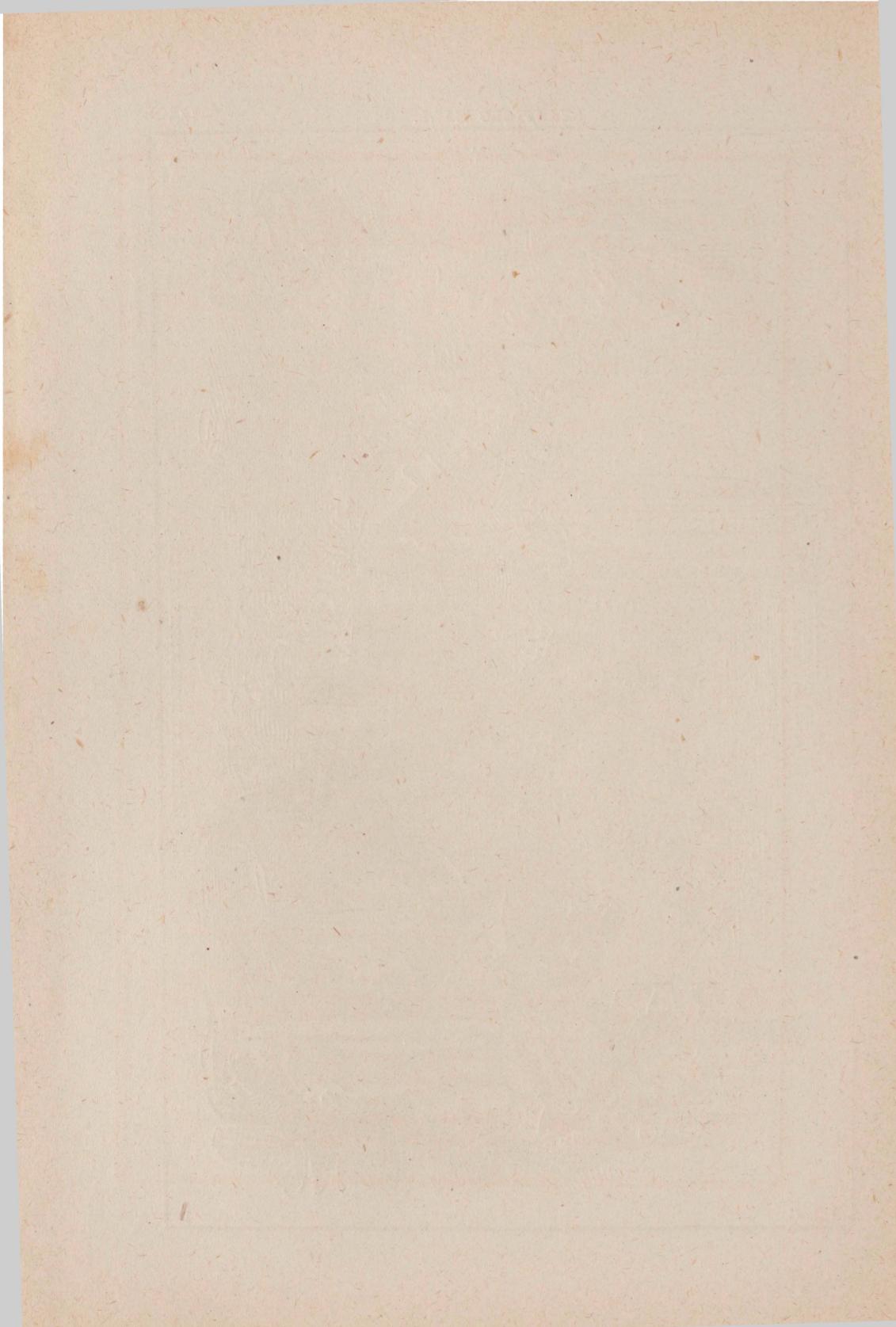


VOL. II.



[KATHERINE BEFORE THE LEGATES.]

STANFIELD HALL.



*"I trust we shall,"* replied the jester, with a look equally expressive ; "but first, friend, for the love of our Lady, give me a cup of wine. I have not moistened my lips since vespers, as I'm a Christian priest."

The fellow walked to a corner of the room, and poured out a cup of wine from a large stone bottle, which he carefully placed upon the table, after handing the cup to the speaker, who prudently smelt it before applying it to his lips.

"Excellent liquor, no doubt, friend," he said, drily, "for thy prisoners, but somewhat too thin for thy guests ; hast thou no better wine than this ?"

"None," answered the gaoler ; "but I know where it may be procured."

"Where ?"

"At the Rose," replied the ruffian, smacking his lips, for he remembered the flavour of the draught the friar had given him to seal their bargain with on the previous evening.

"Out on thee for a rogue," said Patch, poking him at the same time playfully in the ribs ; "dost think that Holy Church is as rich in carnal wealth as spiritual treasure ? Well, well," he continued, as if melted by the recollection of the good quality of the liquor of mine host of the Golden Rose, "it is not often that we indulge in creature-comforts ; there is a testoon, send for the wine, and then to our goodly work."

He threw the piece upon the table as he spoke.

"You, Bernard, go for the wine," said the fellow, who exercised a sort of authority over the rest ; "and you, Gills, to see that he does not drink it on the way ; remember fair play is a jewel."

"Regarded even amongst thieves," added the donor of the coin, who saw the two fellows depart with ill-concealed satisfaction, for the parties were now three to two.

"When shall we begin ?" demanded Walter of the gaoler, for he began to be impatient of the delay.

"As soon as the captain has been his round."

"And that," said the jester, carelessly, as if he was asking the most innocent question in the world, "will be——"

"Exactly at midnight," replied the unsuspecting functionary.

It wanted rather more than a quarter to the time.

"Does he visit your prisoners ?" said Patch, taking up one of the thumbscrews and examining it very attentively, as if to make himself quite master of the mechanism of the instrument.

"A mere form," said the fellow ; "he knocks with his halberd at the door of the tower, and calls, 'Safe ward ?' I reply, 'All's well,' unless," added the fellow, "I happen to be drunk, in which case I answer——"

"In the devil's keeping," said the assistant gaoler, with a laugh, imitating at the same time the gruff voice of his superior.

A glance of intelligence passed between the three friars ; they probably thought the information worth noting, and not the less so that it was gratuitous.

"And what is this, friend ?" demanded the eldest of them, taking up a short bar of wood, covered in the centre with cork, and having strong leather thongs at each end.

"Oh ! that," said the gaoler, "is a gag ; his grace the primate is a humane man, and cannot bear to hear the cries of the prisoners as they are undergoing the question in the tower ; it disturbs his meditations."

"So I should think," observed Patch, drily.

"A childish contrivance," continued the fellow, with an air of contempt, "since thrust it into their mouths as far as you will, it cannot hurt them, provided they bite deeply enough into the cork —otherwise it might perhaps dislocate their jaws, nothing more."

"Really," said his questioner, "the weakness of the reverend lord almost makes me blush ; but Holy Church is so merciful."

"Very," chimed in the two novices.

The speaker took up one of the thumbscrews, and began opening the machine, turning the vices awkwardly, as if to see how they acted. The gaoler looked upon him with a smile of pity at his ignorance.

"Not that way, holy father—not that way !" he exclaimed. "Bless me, how ignorant men become by living in the cloister ! See," he added, taking the instrument from his hand, "this is the way they are applied."

The speaker offered to fix them upon the hands of the friar, who drew back with an air of childish timidity. It was no part of his intention that they should be tried upon himself.

"What !" continued the fellow with a laugh, "are you afraid that I should give your pious fingers a squeeze ? Here," he said, turning to his companion, "hold out your dainty thumbs, and let his reverence see how they should be used."

His companion did as he was directed, and in an instant the instrument was closed upon him, and the screws turned, not sufficiently to hurt him, but only to hold him tight. Again the three friars exchanged looks, which seemed to say that the decisive moment had arrived.

"By our Lady," cried the jester, with the most candid air imaginable, taking up a second instrument from the table, "but it does seem very easy. I almost think I could manage it myself. Hold out thy thumbs, friend, and let me try ?"

The unsuspecting gaoler, with a laugh, did as he was requested ; in fact, he lent himself to the caprice of his guest much with the air of an old soldier who lends his weapon to a child to play with, giving the bungler directions all the while to use it. He found Patch an apt scholar.

"Now," he said, as soon as he had placed his digits in the hollow, "close the lid—quite right; don't be afraid of hurting me."

"I won't," muttered the learner to himself.

"That's it," he continued, "turn the screw—bravo!—excellent—you'll do it as well as I can in time. Gently—the other way—the other way, I tell you—curse it, the fool has crushed my fingers."

The gaoler and his companion being thus cleverly secured, the three friars immediately proceeded to action. The young men drew their concealed weapons from beneath their gowns, whilst their comrade hastily barred the doors of the apartment.

"Betrayed!" roared the astonished ruffian, who saw too late that he had been made a fool of. "What, ho! captain of the guard—treason; the prisoners will es—"

His further exclamations, as well as his attempt to reach the window, were cut short by Patch, who thrust one of the gags, the use of which he had so elaborately explained, into his mouth, and tied it with the leathern thongs tightly at the back of his head. Walter and his brother novice did the same kind office for his assistant—a stolid, stupid-looking fellow, who appeared too much surprised at the whole proceedings to offer the least resistance.

"Not badly arranged," said the jester, with a smile of satisfaction, to his friend, as soon as the operation was complete. "I question if our old acquaintance Adam could have managed it much better. We must, however, secure them to the staples in the wall."

Despite the mute resistance of the wretches, they were compelled at last to yield. An extra turn or two of the thumbscrews made them as tractable as lambs. It was astonishing how very clever their pupil had become; certes, he was an apt scholar.

"Where are the keys of the upper chamber?" he demanded of the chief gaoler.

The fellow remained with his eyes obstinately fixed upon the ceiling; it required more than an extra twinge before he pointed with his manacled hands to the hook where they were hanging; for, of course, he could not speak.

"Good!" said Patch, with a patronising air; "we shall understand each other in time."

The ruffian's eyes flashed with fearful fury; for the first time in his life he had been made to feel a slight portion of the pangs he had so frequently inflicted; and, like most brutal natures, he was cowardly sensitive of pain. At this moment three distinct knocks were given with the butt end of a halberd upon the door below, and the voice of the captain of the guard was heard demanding, "Safe ward?"

This was the most critical moment of the whole. The captives naturally imagined that the captain of the watch, not hearing the usual reply, would mount the stairs to ascertain the cause, and

already they indulged in the anticipation of a ferocious vengeance. They were doomed, however, to disappointment; for the jester advanced coolly to the window, and imitating the gaoler's voice, for he was an excellent mimic, roared out in a drunken tone, "In the devil's keeping."

A low inarticulate growl announced the fellow's hopeless rage at the success of the trick. In a few minutes the tramp of the guard died away, and the three adventurers mounted to the upper chamber to release their friends, whom they found barbarously chained against the wall in such a position that it was impossible for them to lie or sit.

Walter and his young companion hastily released Father Celestine and the son of Sir Richard Everil from their chains. The third prisoner was a youth of not more than sixteen, whose emaciated frame and terror-stricken gaze announced that his sufferings, both mentally and physically, must have been great.

"God!" muttered Patch to himself, as he unlocked the poor boy's fetters, "can such cruelties exist?"

No sooner was the captive released than he sank upon his knees to the supposed friar, imploring his pity. The sight of a churchman's robe had lately been to him a sign of persecution. No wonder that it inspired him with fear. It was not without some difficulty that its wearer reassured him.

"How came you within their toils?" he demanded. "Thou art too young for heresy. Tell me thy name."

"Louis," replied the youth, hesitatingly.

"Louis! what else?"

"D'Auverne," he faltered.

"D'Auverne!" almost shrieked his liberator, dreadfully agitated at the name. "It cannot be; devils would pause at such a deed. Poor boy! thou shalt be avenged—terribly, fearfully avenged! This present hour I must devote to thy security. That once assured, thine enemies may tremble. Give me a token," he added, "that thou hast not deceived me."

The rescued youth whispered something in his ear which perfectly assured the speaker of his truth; for, with a burst of almost parental fondness, he pressed him to his heart.

The late captives could scarcely believe in their good fortune when told that they were free. Their situation was still one, however, of too much danger to permit any time to be wasted in idle congratulations. Holding his young charge, in whose safety he had so suddenly become interested, by the hand, Patch conducted the fugitives from their prison; nor did the party once pause to draw breath till they reached the boat, where they found the knight and his friends most anxiously expecting them. The two warders who had been sent to the Golden Rose for wine were lying, gagged and fast bound, at the bottom of the vessel.

"We have performed our promise," said the leader of the expedition to Sir Richard, pointing to his companions; "now, then, keep yours."

"And must we never meet again?" demanded the grateful father, who could scarcely keep his eyes from the contemplation of his rescued son, or sufficiently thank his mysterious deliverer.

"Never," said the friar, sadly: "our paths in life are different. Those who see me masked must never know me, should we meet face to face."

"Is there no proof of my gratitude——"

"Yes," interrupted the jester, "take this boy; protect his flight to Antwerp; guard him as you would the token on which depends your safety. Save him for my sake, love him for his own."

"He will deserve it, father," exclaimed his fellow-prisoner; "he hath cheered my heart in many a lonely hour."

"By Heaven!" said the knight, solemnly, taking the boy by the hand, "I will; he shall be unto me even as a son."

The youth silently kissed his hand, and fixed his eyes inquiringly on Patch, in whom he suddenly seemed to place unbounded confidence.

"What are we to do with these ruffians?" demanded one of the rowers, pointing to the prisoners at the bottom of the boat. "To release them were madness—to slay them unnecessary cruelty."

"Take them with you," said the jester; "they are more fortunate than their comrades in the tower yonder, whose lives must pay the penalty of this night's work. Now, then, away at once," he added—"pull for your lives. If assailed, defend yourselves like men for whom mercy is no more; remember that the axe and cord are suspended over the neck of every one till he sets foot in Antwerp."

Walter hastily embraced his venerable friend, and placed him in the vessel, where the other fugitives were already seated. Waving his hand in silent adieu, he and his companion remained standing on the bank watching them as they disappeared. The tide, most fortunately, was running down, and the bark shot like an arrow towards London Bridge.

At this moment the beacon, which was always kept ready, was lit on the summit of the Lollards' Tower, to warn the water-guard that some prisoners had escaped. The palace-watch, on their return, finding the door of the prison open, and obtaining no answer to their summons, had mounted to the chamber of the gaoler, and all was consequently discovered.

"We may still give them time," said Patch, rushing to the only boat near the bank, and tossing the oars into the middle of the stream. "Now, then," he added, "off with your frock and cowl."

Walter did as he was directed.

"Can you swim?"

A plunge in the water was the reply. It was followed by a

second ; and ere the pursuers could reach even the bank the two friends had gained the current, and were making way rapidly towards York House, on the opposite side of the river. A discharge of firearms which took place indicated that they were seen, and the splashing of the balls in the water near them warned the swimmers that they were not yet entirely out of danger.

The tide being in their favour, a very short time brought them to the landing-place, up which they carefully crept, for the moon was shining so brightly that they were fearful of being seen making their way to the postern, which the jester carefully opened. Once inside, the fugitives were safe.

"Our friends," whispered Walter, anxiously,—"think you they will escape ?"

"If they show a bold front they will," replied his companion, shaking himself like a great water-dog. "Young man," he added, "there is a strange sort of confidence between us—something like that which, in my boyhood's days, I once called friendship, till the world taught me another name."

"Call it so still," said our hero ; "old names are most familiar to the heart, certain to the ear."

"I mean to try it," continued Patch.

"How so ?" demanded the youth, anxious to prove the strength of his attachment to his capricious friend. "You saw my meeting with yon poor boy to-night ?"

"I did, with wonder—what of it ?"

"What wouldest thou do if I should bid thee, by this friendship, then,—this schoolboy dream which thou believest in,—to forget it ?"

"Forget it !" answered Walter, with a simplicity which was at once a pledge of his sincerity and truth.

"I think thou art right, after all—old names are best," said the jester. "Therefore we'll call it friendship." With these words the speakers separated, each one to press a sleepless, anxious pillow.

On the following morning, Wolsey, with his usual attendants, took water to visit the Court at Greenwich. During the voyage, Patch, who had once more donned his official costume, remained close behind his master's seat, occasionally leaning over it in earnest conversation. Once or twice, from the expression of his countenance, Walter imagined that he was relating to his eminence the history of their last night's adventure. While thus engaged, none of the household, not even Cromwell or Cavendish, ventured to approach the churchman ; it being an understood thing that when thus occupied with the fool, the cardinal desired no listeners to what passed between them. The gilded barge at last drew up close to the landing-place, where the college now stands. A group of courtiers and lacqueys, in the royal liveries, were watching its arrival.

"Welcome, my Lord of York," said Sir Thomas Wyat, more favourably known as a poet than a courtier, and whose after-connection, real or supposed, with Anne Boleyn nearly cost him his life. "His majesty is walking in the park. I am honoured with his commands to conduct your grace to his presence. He is impatient for your company."

The haughty prelate merely bowed, and taking a packet which the Earl of Derby presented to him, motioned to the speaker to precede him. The jester fell back into his usual place in the train, near to his favourite Walter. They had not proceeded far across the park before they encountered Henry, who, with his attendants, was amusing himself by shooting with a cross-bow at the butts. As soon as he beheld his minister, he cast the instrument aside, and advanced to meet him. The monarch was, at this time, in the prime of life, of that goodly presence which the portraits of him by Holbein have rendered familiar to the English people. Although stout, his person presented no indication of that frightful obesity which in the latter years of his life rendered him incapable of all active sports, and so soured his temper that he became an object of terror to all who ventured to approach him.

"You have returned in right good time, my lord," he exclaimed, graciously extending his hand, which Wolsey kissed. "By my halidom, but we began to grudge the Norfolk boors so much of your fair presence. But you have heard the news?—Clement hath found his reason."

"I have," replied the churchman.

"Ha! this looks like business," continued the king, rubbing his hands with an air of satisfaction. "The holy father tires, it seems, of the double part the Emperor imposes, and sends his legates with full powers to decide 'twixt me and Kate. Campeggio has arrived at Calais."

A close observer might have remarked a troubled expression in the eye of Wolsey at the intelligence.

"Never hath Rome sent so beggarly an ambassador," continued the speaker. "No matter, we must honour him, if not for his master's sake, for the cause he comes to judge. See to it, Wolsey—see to it; the honour of thy purple is concerned."

The minister gravely bowed in token of obedience.

"And now," said Henry, "come with me to the terrace. Thou must see Kate, and prepare her for the coming trial. Heaven knows," he added, hypocritically, "it is not for the vain pleasures of concupiscence that we have raised the question, but for the satisfaction of our conscience. Conscience, cardinal," he repeated, throwing his arm at the same time familiarly over his favourite's shoulder, "the only monitor of kings."

"And the one," whispered Patch to his companion Walter, "which they least attend to."

Katherine of Arragon, the unhappy wife of Henry VIII., was seated on the terrace of Greenwich Palace, attended by her maids of honour, enjoying the morning breeze. Amongst the bevy of fair girls and noble dames who, divided into various groups, were indulging in the usual gossip of a Court, was the beautiful but thoughtless Anne Bullen, or Boleyn—for the name is spelt differently by contemporary writers—the queen's still more unfortunate successor. At this period, although the attentions of Henry were sufficiently marked, the lively object of them was far from indulging in the hope that his capricious love would one day raise her to the Crown. Still less did she dream that it would precipitate her from it to the scaffold. Educated in the gallant Court of France, whither she accompanied the king's sister on her marriage with Louis XII., admiration was familiar to her; perhaps it also afforded her an opportunity of tormenting a young nobleman, to whom at this time she was engaged, Lord Percy, eldest son of the Earl of Northumberland, which engagement, at the secret instigation of Henry, Wolsey contrived to break, and hence the future queen's bitter animosity towards the cardinal.

"And you really think her pretty?" said Anne to the Countess of Derby, glancing at the same time towards the heiress of Stanfield, who, seated at Katherine's feet, was for the second time relating to her royal benefactress the trials and dangers to which she had been exposed.

The countess nodded assent; and added, "Wyat thinks her so."

"Oh! resumed the fair questioner, poutingly; "like his friend Surrey, he admires every fair woman. Poets are seldom judges of beauty. Has the king seen her yet?"

This was asked with an air of indifference, as if it was the most unimportant question in the world. Her companion smiled; she was too long accustomed to the atmosphere of a Court to be deceived.

"Not yet," she replied. "The lady, it seems, was too much fatigued with her journey to be present at last night's masque; but here comes his majesty—now, then, we shall judge."

Katherine rose at the approach of her unkind husband, who saluted her with the ceremonious politeness due to her rank—a respect which, to his credit it may be observed, he never forgot. Casting his eyes round the circle, perhaps to avoid the mute, imploring look of the queen, they fell upon the Lady Mary. With his usual brusque manner, he demanded:

"Hey, May-bird! who have we here?"

Wolsey named his *protégé* to the monarch, who was still leaning on his shoulder.

"What!" he exclaimed, "my old friend Mauny's grandchild? Hast any semblance of his honest face?"

The queen whispered her to approach, which the orphan did

with graceful modesty, and bent the knee before the speaker, whose evident admiration was commented on by all.

Anne Boleyn looked furious, and Walter unhappy.

Patch, who loved a game of cross purposes, was perhaps the only party present who was amused.

"By my faith!" continued the king, half-playfully and half-wantonly, touching her burning cheek with his finger, "thou hast thy grandsire's clear bright eye—though, not to wrong the good knight's memory, a somewhat fairer visage. Welcome, sweetheart, to our Court. 'Tis the fairest maiden," he added, turning to Wolsey, "I have set eyes upon since Lammastide."

Covered with blushes, the trembling orphan withdrew to her place beside the queen. The eyes of Anne Boleyn were fixed upon her with an angry expression as she did so. Half the Court already set them down as rivals.

"Kate," said Henry, turning to his wife, who still retained her seat upon the terrace, "before vespers my lord of York will visit you in your closet; his errand is of special import—touching our future peace."

The unhappy Katherine meekly bowed her head in token of acquiescence—or perhaps it was to hide a tear. She dreaded Wolsey's visits: they had of late been fatal to her happiness. Nor was the cardinal himself much less embarrassed.

"Who is that youth?" demanded the king, glancing at Walter, whose agitated countenance during the interview between the heiress and himself had not escaped his observation.

"Walter Lucas, the youth I named to your majesty," answered his eminence, at the same time making a sign to the young man to approach, who immediately bent the knee before the monarch, who eyed him with an expression of countenance which those who knew him judged to be anything but favourable.

"By St. George! a stalwart youngster, well knit, and stout of limb," he exclaimed, "whose services have merited our favour. Let him," he added, turning to the minister, "be the bearer of your letters to Campeggio; we owe him so much grace."

Radiant with smiles, the unsuspecting youth would have expressed his gratitude, for he deemed the unexpected command of the monarch the first step in the ladder which was to elevate him nearer to the object of his wishes.

But a peculiar look from his protector restrained him; he contented himself, therefore, by bowing and retreating to his old position by the side of Patch.

"I am fortunate," he whispered to his companion.

"Very," said the jester, drily; "as fortunate as the starving traveller in the desert who found a pearl."

"What mean you?" demanded the youth.

"Simply that a loaf would have been better," replied his friend;

"nothing more—but silence," he continued, "the game is but beginning; we shall have more sport yet."

At this moment, to the terror of Walter, Archbishop Warham, attended by the captain of his guard and a party of yeomen, leading the gaoler and his companion prisoner, appeared upon the terrace.

The aged primate's voice trembled with agitation as he addressed the king, and informed him of the escape of Father Celestine, whose crime was in Henry's eyes second only to treason.

"What," said the tyrant, his eyes flashing with ill-suppressed rage, "have we traitors so near us? 'Tis time we took the reins in our own hands, since delegated rule grows weak, and rank offence aims at our very person. Knew you of this, my lord?" he added, turning fiercely upon Wolsey.

"No such report," said his eminence, calmly, "hath been made to me. The prisoner was not in my keeping. The moment I heard of his monstrous crime I forwarded him under a sure escort to the Tower. It was by your majesty's own order, as I hear," concluded the speaker, "that he was transferred to Lambeth."

"Right!" exclaimed Henry, in a milder tone. "I was a fool to trust the villain to the guard of doting age. Thou art always right, good Wolsey; we are as a child when counselled by another."

"Sire," said the venerable Warham, deeply moved by the brutal passion of his master, "my age indeed is heavy, since you reproach me with it."

"Tut, tut, tut—let that pass," muttered the king; "when our blood is chafed we measure not the letter of our words. What hang-dogs," he added, glaring ferociously upon the prisoners, "bring you with you?"

"So please your majesty, the gaolers," said the primate, "by whose treachery or carelessness the prisoners have escaped."

The terrified wretches sank upon their knees before their inexorable judge, exclaiming, "Mercy!"

Walter was about to start forward and avow the whole transaction. Hardened as their office had rendered them, he could not endure the thought of their suffering death through any act of his. Patch saw his intention, and laying his hand upon his arm, quietly whispered him:

"There is a better way: follow me."

The youth obeyed him like a child, and retreated after him from the circle. In a few minutes they were seated in a chamber in one of the smaller turrets of the palace, the jester's usual lodging when at Greenwich with his master. First carefully locking the door, he pointed to a seat, and took one opposite to him: Walter's back was to the window.

"Thou hast one peculiar talent for a courtier," said Patch, as soon as they were seated.

"Indeed! What is that?"

"The art of compromising thy friends."

"No matter," exclaimed the young man; "I cannot bear the thought that yon poor wretches should suffer for my crime; their dying groans would haunt me in my dreams. I grant them heartless, cruel, hardened in their fearful office, till it hath brutalised their nature; bad as they are, they are but what society hath made them."

"A philosopher," interrupted his companion.

"No," resumed the speaker, "but a man who would risk something to keep a quiet conscience. Henry lately spoke to me with favour, commended my zeal and service. I will confess all, and—"

"Die," added the jester; "I have no wish to hang even in thy company."

"Thinkest thou I could betray thee?"

"No," answered Patch; "but I might betray myself. Poor boy, thou art surrounded with dangers enough already; from this, at least, I have preserved thee. Whither wouldest thou go?" he demanded, observing that Walter was advancing towards the door.

"To the king."

"Too late," said his friend, pointing to the window. "Behold!"

The gaoler and his companion were swinging from the branches of a lofty oak in front of the tower where they sat.

## CHAPTER X.

The cunning net which fraud and treachery weave  
Shall oft by Providence' o'erruled hand  
Be spread to their confusion, and the mesh  
In which they sought to snare their victim's steps  
Prove their own pitfall.—"CREON."

IMMEDIATELY after the execution of the gaoler and his assistant, Henry took the arm of his favourite, Sir John Perrot, a courtier who continued longer, perhaps, than any other to retain the friendship of the capricious monarch, and drew him aside towards the park, a signal to those in attendance to keep out of earshot. Such confidence was not uncommon between the king and knight, who exercised a sort of secret ministry under his suspicious master, and was employed by him in certain delicate transactions, the nature of which even Wolsey was supposed to be a stranger to.

"So, Perrot," said the monarch, as soon as they were alone, "this beggarly Italian hath arrived at Calais, where our governor writes me word he is detained for lack of means. Methinks," he added, bitterly, "the holy father, when he sends a legate to our Court, might at least furnish him with the necessary *viaticum*. By St. Paul! but he takes tithe enough to do so."

"St. Peter's net," replied the courtier, with a smile, "is like a mouse-trap."

"How so?" demanded his master.

"It lets all in, but nothing out," answered the knight.

"Right, Perrot, right!" exclaimed Henry, with a hearty laugh; for the simile, coarse as it was, pleased him. "Rome swallows up in tribute enough to support an army. Perhaps we may one day take some measure with it touching the subject; but of this no word, the time is far from ripe. Didst mark that stripling lately —Lucas I think my lord of York named him in our presence."

"I did, your grace," said the courtier; "also the impatient look which followed the mark of favour your highness bestowed upon the maid of Stanfield!"

"I noted him," replied the monarch, with a look which was anything but a favourable augury for the subject of their conversation.

"In sooth, the maid is fair," continued the courtier, "and merits a sovereign's favour."

"Dost thou think so?" demanded the prince, with an affectation of indifference which did not deceive his companion, who knew how seldom the speaker gave expression, even to him, of his real sentiments. "Of her, perhaps, hereafter; for the present," he added, "of this Lucas. He is to be the bearer of Wolsey's letters to his brother legate—to this Italian priest Campeggio."

"True, your grace."

"I must have those letters," continued Henry, in a whisper, as if fearful that the trees should echo back his words. "I am consumed with doubts which burn like an overflowing gall within me. I will be satisfied. Priest to priest, they will be confident. I'd know the writer's mind; I'd have his heart, Perrot, here in my hand like an open book before me—read each thought, trace every subtle turning. Then, if I find the mitred puppet plays me false, I'll trample him, despite Rome's purple, like mire beneath my feet."

The courtier trembled at the dangerous confidence of his imperious master; he felt like a man who was walking blindfold upon the edge of a precipice—to advance or to retreat alike were dangerous.

"Hast heard my will, man?" continued the speaker, harshly. "We are not used to speak our pleasure twice."

"Your highness's favour," replied Sir John, "must be my shield, should my lord of York suspect my agency in this sad matter."

"What!" he exclaimed, "hath the shadow become more powerful than the substance—the servant more dreaded than his master? 'Tis time I look about me, since a churchman's hat bears down a kingly crown."

"Your grace has misconceived me," faltered the courtier;

"Heaven forbid a thought like this should wrong my master's honour. The letters shall be obtained—if possible without violence," he added, fixing his eyes meaningly upon the king ; "but should the bearer resist, and be slain—"

"Bury him," said Henry, carelessly ; "what is a peasant's life against a monarch's pleasure ? How now, my lords !" he continued, turning to his train, who, during the conversation, had kept at a respectful distance ; "it seems that we must wait your service. It is not often princes complain they are alone."

The nobles, who understood the reproof as an ungracious intimation that they might approach the speaker, immediately thronged round their capricious master, who entered into conversation with them on the merits of a cast of hawks which his brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk, had that very morning presented him with, and which he intended to fly on the morrow.

As the party proceeded through the royal chase of Greenwich, Sir John Perrot contrived gradually to fall into the rear of the courtiers ; and soon afterwards, taking advantage of a turn in the wood, the knight detached himself from the royal train altogether, and retraced his way to the palace. As he mounted the steps of the terrace he encountered Patch, who, as usual, was loitering in the sun—a jest upon his lips for most men, and a sneer for some.

The courtier and the fool entered the courtyard together.

That very night a Benedictine monk and an esquire of the king's guard left the royal residence for Calais, each unsuspicous of the other's errand. The game had commenced ; neither the cardinal nor the monarch trusted each other.

Early on the following morning Walter was prepared for his departure. He encountered his protector on his way to Mass, attended by the noblemen and officers of his household ; for, even in the residence of the king, Wolsey maintained his state. The poor youth's heart was heavy, for he was about to undertake a journey without one farewell to the object of his love—one opportunity of entreating for her the watchful care of one whom, in his ignorance of Courts, he believed to be all-powerful.

"'Tis well, young man," said his eminence, as the messenger knelt before him ; "here are your credentials ; spare not for spur or rein till you arrive at Dover, where the captain of the port, on the production of your despatches, will place a boat at your disposal. It is a high trust," he continued, "for one so young ; execute it wisely, that our royal master may not find his favour thrown away upon the heedless or the worthless."

Cromwell, Wolsey's secretary, placed in the young man's hand a packet bound with a silken thread, and sealed with the cardinal's legatine seal. It was addressed to Campeggio. Walter placed it carefully in the breast of his doublet, exclaiming as he did so :

"They must reach my heart, my lord, who would deprive me of

it. Fast as man can do your errand I will do it. Deign but to add your benediction on my way."

A close observer might have seen an uneasy expression in the churchman's eye, as he traced the air-drawn cross over the speaker's head, and bade God speed him.

The traveller had not proceeded far upon his journey before he heard the clatter of a heavy horse upon the lone stony road behind him. Turning his head, he was surprised to see the rider, whose features from the distance it was impossible to recognise, making signs to him to stop. Concluding that some portion, perhaps, of his instructions had been forgotten, he drew rein, and was shortly afterwards joined by his old friend Patch, who had ridden hard to join him.

"What errand brings thee here?" demanded the young man, holding out his hand.

"A fool's!" replied the jester; "at least, the world would deem it so. I come to serve a friend. A pest upon thee, boy," he added, with a melancholy smile; "I shall get human soon, and all thy fault. Already I begin to dream, e'en as I dreamt in childhood's thoughtless days, when trust and friendship were not mockeries to me. But let that pass; we must speak touching thy journey and thy safety. The packet with the letters from our master to Campeggio——"

"Are safe in my possession," interrupted Walter, with surprise. "But what of them?"

"Thou wilt guard them well?" said the jester, inquiringly.

"Dost doubt my courage or my honesty?" exclaimed the young man, deeply wounded by the suspicion which he thought the words of the speaker were intended to convey. "Guard them well!" he repeated; "I'll guard them even with my life, should any try to deprive me of them."

"The trial will be made," coolly interrupted his companion. "Tis to forewarn thee that I am here."

"Indeed! by whom?"

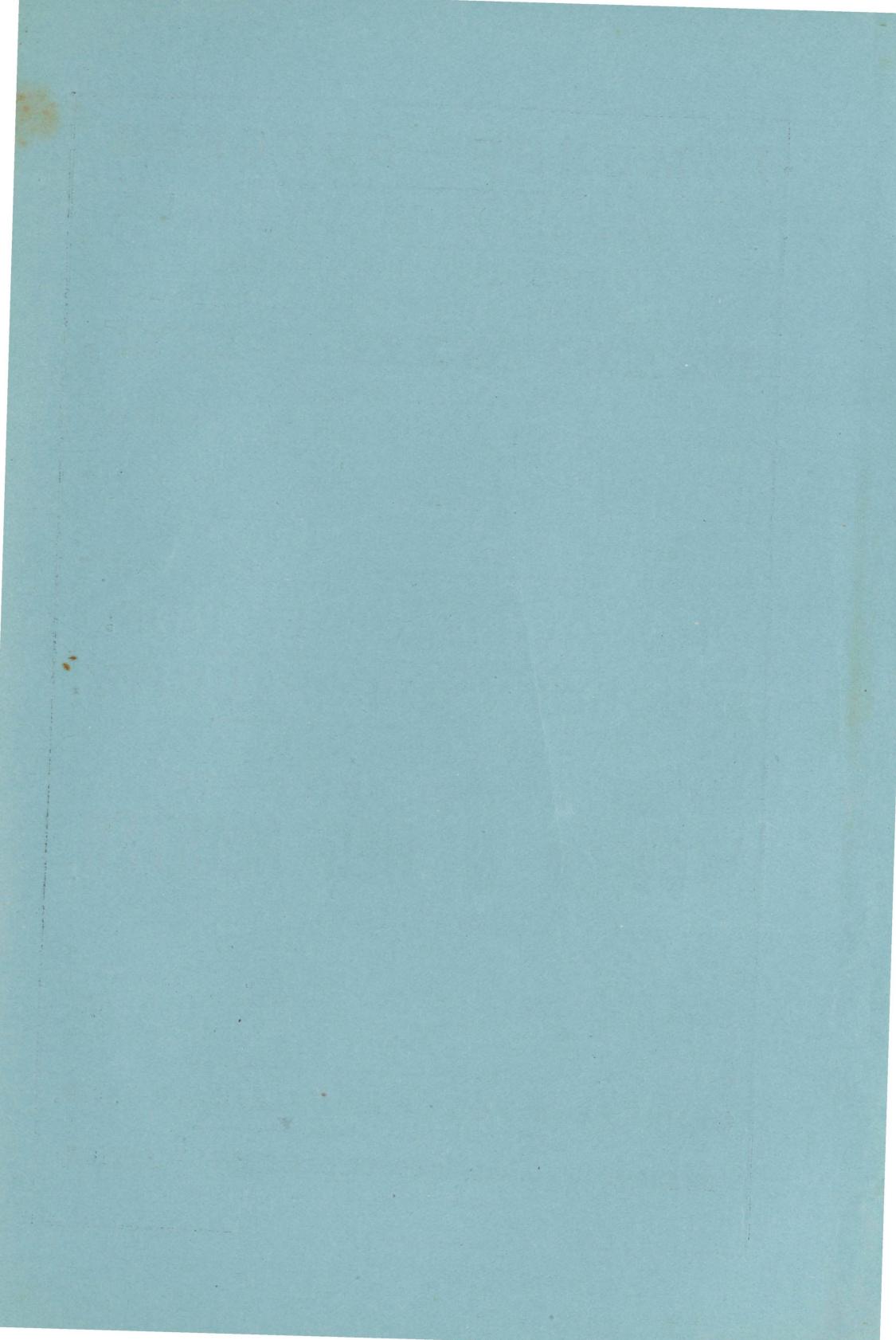
"A kingly robber, though not a kingly hand," continued Patch. "Canst thou, even when the knife is at thy throat, appear to sleep, and let no quivering lip, no blinking of the eye, or start of fear, betray thy trembling consciousness?"

"I can. But what of this?" demanded his hearer, still more and more confounded at his words.

"Simply," resumed the speaker, "that the letters which thou bearest, though addressed to this Italian priest Campeggio, are written for the king. Henry suspects his minister, and descends to act the robber to satisfy his doubts. Now dost thou understand?"

"I do."

"And at the hostel on the road, where the attempt will first be made, wilt lend thyself to this apparent theft?"



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